



Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register Frequently Asked Questions

What exactly is the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register?

A cemetery listed in the register is considered by the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC) to be historically significant and worth protecting. A cemetery's inclusion in the register should help increase awareness for preservation and planning purposes. It can also expand interest in a cemetery, and possibly even attract volunteer and funding opportunities.

What is required for a cemetery to be included on the register?

There are specific [criteria](#) that must be met to qualify for addition to the register, which can be found on our website.

Are prehistoric Native American cemeteries eligible for the register?

No, prehistoric Native American cemeteries are not eligible for the register.

What are the benefits of a cemetery being listed?

The Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register is honorary and intended to be a research and planning tool.

Who reviews the application?

The Historic Cemetery Preservation Specialist is the primary individual who approves the application; however, in certain circumstances others at the THC may be included in the decision.

If a cemetery isn't added to the register, what happens then?

All information is recorded and kept by the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Preservation Program. The data sent to us will still be added to the database and added to the cemetery map. Please do not hesitate to send us information about a cemetery through the application, even if your cemetery does not qualify for the register. If over time the criteria are met, the cemetery will be added to the register. In addition, if you have questions as to why the cemetery was not approved, contact the Historic Cemetery Preservation Specialist who can help.

If my application is successful, what if anything, will I receive?

A certificate from the Tennessee Historical Commission mailed to the applicant's address. You may choose to celebrate the listing with a marker consisting of THC acknowledgement that the cemetery has been addition to the register (Note: THC does not provide the markers). The cemetery remains on the Register in perpetuity.

What is the process for ordering a Historic Cemetery Register Marker?

Contact the Historic Cemetery Preservation Specialist who will connect you with the vendor. Then you and the vendor will work out the details.

Does THC have markers for sale?

The Tennessee Historical Commission does not sell markers. You are not required to purchase a marker upon listing to the Tennessee Historic Cemetery Register.

Once approved, where do I purchase my cemetery's official marker?

Paul W. Zimmerman Foundries/Erie Landmark Company. Once you decide to purchase a sign, contact our office for approval and we will put you in touch with them. They will handle the rest! Only one sign is permitted per cemetery.

The Historic Cemetery Register Does:

Provide information about historic resources for federal, state, local, or private agencies to use as a planning tool.

List a cemetery only if it meets the Historic Register's criteria for significance and integrity.

The Historic Cemetery Register Does Not:

Establish any ownership credentials or provide permission to visit, maintain, repair, beautify, bury a loved one, or for a cemetery. This should be cleared with the legal owner (or a family member of someone buried in the cemetery if the owner is not known).

Change ownership of the cemetery. A cemetery may have an established owner, and if it doesn't it belongs to family. You are highly advised to work with these individuals to submit the application.

Require that a cemetery be maintained, repaired, or restored.

Provide markers or plaques for listed properties. Applicants may purchase plaques or markers if they wish; however, only one official THC marker will be approved to be purchased per cemetery.

Assure that cemetery owners or interested parties receive grants when funds are available.

Provide state or local tax benefits or loans to owners of cemeteries.

Note that cemeteries of ¼ acre or greater should already be listed as tax exempt by the property assessor. Regardless of a cemetery's size, an owner can always request a tax break for the cemetery. It is a good thing to make sure the county still lists you as the owner of the cemetery to avoid future confusion.

Approve purchase of a THC marker without establishing that owner or majority family permission has been granted.